

FIFTH WAVE INITIATIVE: ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATION INFORMATION

The Fifth Wave Initiative is a suite of program offerings focused on supporting expansion-ready women-owned/led digital media businesses in southern Ontario.

Applicants interested in participating in any aspect of the Fifth Wave Initiative must first apply for review and acceptance to the Fifth Wave Connect program. Adjudication of applications are made on a rolling basis throughout the year.

Each annual cohort of Fifth Wave Labs will be announced on this website, and require an additional application by companies that have already been accepted into Fifth Wave Connect. Other opportunities within the initiative (like Fifth Wave Outreach) are by invitation only to companies in the Connect program.

ELIGIBILITY

Companies are eligible to apply to Fifth Wave Initiative if they are:

- Women-owned/led small or medium-sized digital media enterprises
- Based in southern Ontario
- Mid-to-later-stage businesses with a product/service in market
- Content, service or technology-enabled businesses
- Export-ready

At least 30% of the participants will be drawn from:

- Women with disabilities
- Neurodiverse women
- 2SLGBTQ+ women
- Indigenous women
- Women of visible minorities
- Women in rural or remote regions
- Newcomers to Canada
- Women from Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs)

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants interested in participating in any aspect of the Fifth Wave Initiative must first apply for review and acceptance to the Fifth Wave Connect program.

Adjudication of applications are made on a rolling basis throughout the year. Complete the application form here: <https://www.tfaforms.com/4766912>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: WHAT KIND OF TANGIBLE RESULTS DOES THE FIFTH WAVE INITIATIVE SEEK TO DELIVER?

A: First and foremost, Fifth Wave Initiative exists to help women-led companies grow and become financially sustainable. To achieve this, we have designed a unique, high-powered program that will strengthen founders' business skills, generate new insights, accelerate business development efforts (domestically and internationally), grow revenues/monetize followings, facilitate access to aligned capital and to values-aligned, diverse mentors and coaches for women in business. We will also leverage the Government of Canada's women's entrepreneurship initiatives, for example, participation in supplier diversity efforts.

Q: WHAT KIND OF GAPS IN THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM DOES FIFTH WAVE INITIATIVE SEEK TO ADDRESS?

A: Women-owned/led companies are underrepresented in mainstream accelerator programs. Additionally, studies continue to show that women entrepreneurs looking to grow their companies experience additional barriers to success. As a result, Fifth Wave Initiative seeks to help women entrepreneurs access (1) relevant, values-aligned capital; (2) viable, alternative pathways for growth and (3) support for women serving as primary caregivers while growing a company. It also seeks to provide guidance on (1) relationship capital and/or expertise in securing government grants; (2) how to navigate an extreme-growth, ageist, VC-oriented tech culture; and (3) how to leverage, value and support the lived experiences, social roles and insights of women entrepreneurs.

Q: I'M A 50-50 OWNER OF A COMPANY WITH A MALE CO-FOUNDER. AM I ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

A: While the program welcomes companies that are majority-owned by women, the Fifth Wave Initiative is also open to companies that are *led* by women, even if they do not own a majority of their company's equity.

Q: IS MY COMPANY ELIGIBLE IF WE ARE LOCATED OUTSIDE OF TORONTO?

A: Companies from across southern Ontario are eligible. The primary location of service delivery will be in Toronto, however, additional venues across southern Ontario will be onboarded to host Fifth Wave Connect events.

Q: WHAT KINDS OF COMPANIES FALL WITHIN THE DIGITAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM?

A: We are interested in technology or technology-enabled companies that provide content, services, consulting, platforms and/or products in categories including arts, entertainment, information, education, recreation, culture, immersive media and more.

Q: WHAT STAGES OF COMPANIES ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

A: Companies may range from early- to later-stages in their development; so long as they are offering a product, process or service that is currently in market and generating revenue when they apply.

Q: WHAT ARE FEMINIST BUSINESS PRACTICES AND HOW DO THEY INFORM THE FIFTH WAVE INITIATIVE?

A: Feminist business practices, as they apply to Fifth Wave Initiative, mean learning about alternative enterprise management, design tools and growth strategies, such as feminist business model canvas, ecosystem mapping and inclusive leadership principles. It also means creating sustainable enterprises which value equity, wellness, community, and fairness. We also seek to open up the Ontario startup ecosystem to women founders with a range of definitions of success. We recognize not all successful enterprises depend on traditional private venture capital startup models. In practice, this means that some of our companies will not be seeking rapid growth and market share so much as creating a sustainable business that delivers value to customers and communities, sometimes even niche groups that would otherwise not be served by conventional businesses.

Q: WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM'S OWN DIVERSITY GOALS?

A: Fifth Wave Initiative recruitment and selection will emphasize diversity of thought, background, experience, and enterprise stage within the founders participating in each program component, with a particular lens on encouraging underrepresented age

groups, 2SLGBTQ+ women and nonbinary individuals, women with disabilities, neurodiverse women, Indigenous women, women of visible minorities, women in rural or remote regions, newcomers to Canada, and women from Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs).

Q: WHAT IF I HAVE DIFFICULTY COMPLETING THE QUESTIONS IN THE ONLINE APPLICATION FORM?

A: You may contact us at info@fifthwave.ca and a staff member will assist you.